

Dimensions



A publication for the Employees and Friends of VASDHS

February - March 2006

VASDHS is selected for national VA medical ethics program

by Donna Clar

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As dedicated health professionals, how do we work with patients and families to make difficult medical ethics decisions? How much care is enough? Should the patient stay on a tube feeding or not? These are the tough decisions the San Diego VA Hospital Ethics Advisory Team has been addressing for more than 15 years.

This fall VASDHS was selected by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Center for Ethics in Health Care (Ethics Center) as one of 29 Integrated Ethics Demonstration Sites. Integrated Ethics is a concept aimed at improving patient care and staff satisfaction within the VA system by addressing organizational ethics. The San Diego team was selected because of their existing highly effective ethics team. As part of this program, the team will integrate three

core functions: ethics consultation, preventive ethics and ethical leadership.

The goal of this program is to promote ethics concerns on a case-by-case basis, address systemic ethics issues, and to promote an environment that is conducive to ethical practice. The Integrated Ethics approach accomplishes this by organizing the responsibilities and tasks of the Workgroup as follows:

Ethics Consultation: A team provides oversight of the ethics issues to help patients, providers and other parties resolve uncertainty or conflict about values in a health care setting. The VASDHS Hospital Ethics Advisory Committee (HEAT) currently provides this ethics consultation service.

Preventive Ethics: The workgroup will study and determine ways to identify, correct and prevent systemic ethics issues. They plan to conduct an employee survey, and identify and address issues that can prevent ethics problems in the facility. The team will use the results of

the survey to categorize, rank, and address these issues.

Ethical Leadership: VASDHS health care leaders will focus on fostering an environment and culture that supports ethical practices throughout our organization.

The VASDHS Integrated Ethics Demonstration Workgroup is excited to be a part of this National initiative. The members of this team are:

- Donna Clar, MSN/ MBA - HCM, RN, CRRN – Team Coordinator
- Arnold Gass, MD – Ethics Consultation
- Jacqueline Parthemore, MD - Ethical Leadership
- Sharon De Peralta, MBA, RN – Preventive Ethics

For more information about the Integrated Ethics Program, contact Donna Clar at extension 2210.



San Diego VA is designated Mental Health Center of Excellence

by Cindy Butler

Continuing the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) continued commitment to providing veterans with world-class health care; Secretary R. James Nicholson announced in December that San Diego will be one of three locations designated as a special center of excellence devoted to advancing research and enhancing care for mental health issues that affect some American veterans.

The VA San Diego Healthcare System Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) Program includes three components: 1. Primary Care Post Deployment Clinic (PC-PDC) for returning Iraq and Afghan combat veterans; 2. Military Sexual Trauma Treatment program; and 3. PTSD Stress Disorders Clinical team. The program also includes several research programs related to combat veterans and PTSD.

The Primary Care Post Deployment Clinic is based on a recovery model, and designed to support a seamless transition from the Department of Defense (DoD) to VA. The mission of the clinic is to provide comprehensive integrated (physical/mental health) evaluation, health education and prevention, including stress management, and early

evidence-based treatment interventions for all returning Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF/OEF) veterans in San Diego. The unit will work in tandem with other

VASDHS administrative and clinical staff to provide a seamless transition to health care for all returning combat veterans including veterans from Military Transfer Facilities (MTFs). Outreach, education and early intervention services will be provided in conjunction with San Diego county Readjustment Counseling Service Centers (Vet Centers). The ultimate purpose of the program is to



provide assessment and acute care (first year) for returning OEF/OIF veterans who are having difficulty readjusting, or who have diagnosable mental or physical disorders, with the goal to restore these veterans to pre-war levels of function. The program medical director is Dewleen Baker, MD, and the team includes a staff psychiatrist, nurse practitioner, social workers, psychologists, a case manager and research assistants.

The other programs are the Military Sexual Trauma program, which addresses the needs of men, and women who have faced military

sexual trauma while they were on active duty and the PTSD Clinical Team, which provides group and individual counseling for veterans of earlier conflicts.

The designation of this new 'Center of Excellence' builds upon our history of accomplishment in medical care and research to improve the lives of veterans. VA is committed to treating the 'whole' veteran, and an important part of the care we provide our heroes is to ensure that they get the best treatment available to help them recover from any mental health issues – in addition to any physical medical treatment they may require.

"March" right into National Nutrition Month

by Jenna DeWinter

National Nutrition Month, a campaign promoting nutrition education and awareness, is a great opportunity for you to use the resources offered at the VA to learn how to make smarter food choices. Whether you want to lose weight, feel healthier, or get

food ideas, there is no better time to make a change than now!

Leading a healthy lifestyle through good nutrition and being active can enhance how you feel in mind, body, and spirit. So mark your calendars for National Nutrition Month - March


2006! It could be just the beginning to a healthier YOU!

*Visit our nutrition booth on the first four Thursdays of March in the SCI atrium from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. for more information. Look for booths at Vista, Chula Vista, and Mission Valley, and visit www.eatright.org.



Strategic Plan for VA Research

by Janet Peyton


 A new strategic plan for VA research is to cut across the traditional boundaries of VA's four research services to achieve a new synergy. Aging, chronic diseases, mental illness, substance abuse, sensory loss, trauma-related impairment, health systems, special populations, and military occupational and environmental exposures are primary research targets because of their prevalence in the veteran patient population. Major initiatives in the coming years will reflect the conviction that solving complex health problems requires not only specialized expertise but continuing synthesis, re-examination of important issues, and communication among research disciplines. (Source: ORD Website)

"Excellence is not an act, but a habit"

- Aristotle

National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans

by Lorelei Winn

 The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans was established as an official VA program in March, 1978. The purpose is to pay tribute and express appreciation to America's veteran, increase community awareness of the role of the medical facility and to encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and



Al Bodenlos

become involved as volunteers.


The week of February 14th provides an opportunity for the community to become acquainted with the volunteer opportunities within the medical facility. Volunteers line the main hallway with homemade valentines received from various school children, "heart shaped mylar balloons" are

distributed to all inpatients, beauty queens pose for pictures with the patients and many other service and fraternal organizations take this opportunity to visit and thank our veterans.

The small investment of time spent with veterans bring cheer to many who live far from family and friends, or who have no family at all. A visit, a smile, and a simple hello brighten the day for many veterans.

What is Affirming the Commitment?

by Jean Sobczak

 Any man or woman who has served in the military can tell you about the pain of being away from loved ones . . . about the physical and emotional stress . . . about the fear of being called to make the ultimate sacrifice . . . about the camaraderie and the pride. Military service is distinct among all vocations. It deserves our respect and gratitude.

As employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are not about profits or balance sheets or shareholder returns. We are about service of the noblest

type. We serve those who have lived a commitment to protect our nation. This is an awesome responsibility and privilege.

Every American owes our veterans an incredible debt of gratitude. At VA, we are fortunate to have been chosen to help America repay that debt. Now it is time for us to affirm our commitment to the veterans we so proudly serve.

Affirming the Commitment is a national initiative that will help us:

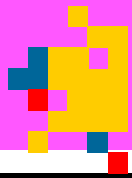
- Better understand and appreciate veterans and their military service.

- Create a culture in which we own VA's mission; a culture based on commitment and pride in serving veterans.

- Make VA a more gratifying place to work reinforcing the importance of our service.

Look for further information on how you can join your colleagues in affirming your commitment to veterans on the Affirming the Commitment web site at <http://vaww.va.gov/atc> or contact Jean Sobczak (3993), Marilyn Dennis (7426), or Anthony Carvajal (619-400-5012) for more information.





Events & Awards

Care and Share 2005

For the 18th year, the VASDHS employees provided support to pack over 270 food baskets for needy veterans and their families for the holidays. The baskets include canned and boxed foods, grocery certificates for turkeys and toys for children. Each basket is custom designed to meet the needs of the family. The baskets provided cheer this past December for 803 people

including 285 children. Our staff raised \$4,000 to support the program – a special thanks to the staff of Utilization Management who raised \$750. Thanks to Marlene Carvajal, 2005 Care & Share chair, her team for their commitment and hard work and for the generosity of all our employees who supported the program.

VA Pharmacy Student Leadership Award



Muoi Gi

Muoi Gi, Pharm.D., Primary Care Pharmacy Practice Resident, is this year's recipient of the 2005 California Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists Award from Western University of Health Sciences School of Pharmacy. Congratulations!

2005 National Veterans Creative Arts Winners



Frank Ross

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival was held in Denver, Colorado on October 2005. The festival culminates a year-long fine arts talent competition in art, music, drama, dance and creative writing. More than 130 U.S. military veterans from across the nation participated, among them were Frank Ross who works in the Trans-

portation Office and Smith Iuli of Medical Media. Ross won first place in the national music competition in the vocal solo (religious) category. Smith tied for first place in the national music competition in the vocal solo (jazz/rhythm and blues) category. Congratulations!



Smith Iuli

FROM THE STAFF

Dimensions is a bimonthly publication of the VA San Diego Healthcare System.

Your suggestions, contributions, and photos are most welcome. Submissions for the April - May 2006 issue are due March 2, 2006

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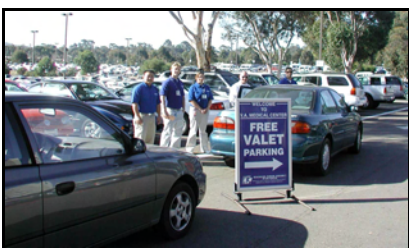
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Free Employee Valet Parking



VASDHS Employee Valet Parking Attendants

VASDHS now offers valet parking service for all employees (including house staff) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. This new service is free and provides convenient parking for our employees. The Valet Parking area is located in the Employee Lot #2. For more information, please contact Police Service at extension 3931.